E.T. the lovable alien stranded on Earth.

Star Wars new mission to save poor

Luke Skywalker, Ewoks, Indiana Jones and E.T. are a magic recipe for an ailing Disneyland.

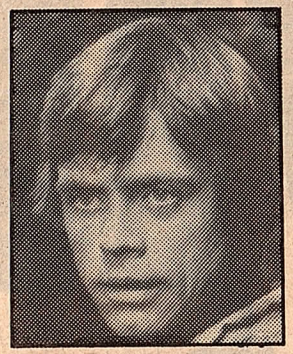
From JENNY CULLEN in Los Angeles

Steven Spielberg and George Lucas, creators of Star Wars, E.T. and Raiders Of The Lost Ark, have been approached by Walt Disney Productions in a bid to breathe new life into California's famous fun park.

This year, when Donald Duck celebrated his 50th birthday and Mickey Mouse turned 56, Disneyland has had problems.

Attendance is down by more than 2 million on the 1978 and 1979 peak years.

It seems Disneyland, the magic kingdom created by Walt Disney in 1955, is no longer sophisticated enough for today's kids.



MARK HAMILL as Luke Skywalker.

Children are no longer reared on Disneyland classics like Peter Pan, Snow White, Cinderella and Pinocchio.

Instead, they have been brought up on the slam-bang special effects magic of movies like Star Wars, Indiana Jones, E.T. and Poltergeist.

"Children who have grown up on Star Wars still know Mickey Mouse, but they are more sophisticated about special effects and want to be dazzled," says Disney Productions spokesman Bob Roth.

Roth says that while children still seem to know and love Disney's classic comic characters, they are less familiar with traditional fairytales which form the base of Disneyland's Fantasyland, and which for 29 years have been the main attraction of Disneyland.

"With our Fantasyland attractions — Alice In Wonderland, Pinocchio, Peter Pan, Toad Of Toad Hall and all the others — we try to keep to a limited number of scenes that give the feeling and the essence of the stories, so that children, unfamiliar with the tales, can at least get the gist," says Roth.

But for the kids of the Star Wars generation, that may not be enough.

After a tough year with flagging attendance, the Olympic Games where visitors to Disneyland fell to an all-time low and where the park was hit last October by a 22-day strike over an employee contract, Disney executives are turning to Spielberg and Lucas to create new magic for the park.

"We are considering using their ideas and creative properties, including characters from their movies, in association with Disneyland and our other parks, said Disney vice president Erwin Okun.

"I think it's a natural development."

Certainly other amusement parks in the Disney genre, like Knott Berry Farm at Ananheim and Universal Studio's Theme Park, have turned more and more to movies or